

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-12. (cancelled)

13. (currently amended) An absorbent structure in an absorbent article selected from the group consisting of a diaper, a pant diaper, an incontinence guard, and a sanitary napkin, said structure comprising a combination of a porous material selected from the group consisting of fibers, foam and mixtures thereof, and a superabsorbent material, wherein the absorbent structure contains at least 50% by weight of superabsorbent material, based on the total weight of the structure in dry condition in at least one area thereof in which the superabsorbent material is distributed; said superabsorbent material ~~being crosslinked by ionic bonds and being in the form of a powder, grains or granules, and being initially crosslinked by ionic bonds with an ionic crosslinking agent comprising a polyvalent metal ion.~~

14. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the superabsorbent material is also covalently cross-linked.

15. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the superabsorbent material comprises a polymer with anionic functional groups.

16. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 15, wherein the superabsorbent material is a crosslinked polymer of a polyacrylate having functional carboxy groups.

17. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 15, wherein the superabsorbent material is crosslinked with a cationic crosslinking agent by cations which are bonded to the anionic functional groups of the superabsorbent material via ionic bonds.

C (18. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 17, wherein the cationic crosslinking agent comprises a polyvalent metal ion.

19. (currently amended) The absorbent structure according to claim [[18]] 13, wherein the polyvalent metal ion is aluminum, zirconium, chromium, titanium or zinc.

20. (currently amended) The absorbent structure according to claim 17, wherein the cationic crosslinking agent is an aluminate ion.

21. (currently amended) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the superabsorbent material is surface crosslinked by [[an]] the ionic crosslinking agent.

22. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 21, wherein the superabsorbent material is substantially homogeneously crosslinked with the ionic crosslinking agent.

23. (previously presented) The absorbent structure according to claim 13, wherein the absorbent structure contains at least 70% by weight of superabsorbent material, calculated on the total weight of the structure in dry condition in at least one area thereof in which the superabsorbent material is distributed.

24. (currently amended) An absorbent article selected from the group consisting of a diaper, a pant diaper, an incontinence guard, and a sanitary napkin, the article comprising a liquid pervious topsheet, a liquid impervious backsheet and an absorbent structure enclosed therebetween; said absorbent structure comprising a combination of a porous material selected from the group consisting of fibers, foam and mixtures thereof, and a superabsorbent material, wherein the absorbent structure contains at least 50% by weight of superabsorbent material, based on the total weight of the structure in dry condition in at least one area thereof in which the superabsorbent material is distributed; said superabsorbent material ~~being crosslinked by ionic bonds and~~ being in the form of a powder, grains or granules, and being initially crosslinked by ionic bonds with an ionic crosslinking agent comprising a polyvalent metal ion.

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